



SESSION

4

True vine



MEETING AIM

To explore what Jesus meant when he said: "I am the vine and you are the branches."



BIBLE PASSAGE

John 15:1-17



BACKGROUND

With this metaphor, focus on the need for branches (children) to be as close to the vine's trunk (Jesus) as possible, so that they can be like him (fruitful). Just as branches that are floppy or weak need to be propped up, so God, the vineyard keeper, helps us. Tell them about pruning, but remember that the idea of being pruned by God because we are fruitless will be difficult for young children.

+ CIRCLE TIME



You will need: picture of a vine and grapes

As the children arrive, sit them in a circle. Ask what the children's favourite drinks are. What makes it a favourite drink? Where does their favourite drink come from? How many fruit trees can children name? Does anyone like grape juice? Does anyone in their family like wine? Show the children your pictures of vines and grapes.

+ INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY



You will need: three large oranges; a lemon squeezer; measuring jug; marker pens;

bowl

Show the children three large oranges. Holding a clear measuring jug, how much juice do they estimate they can get from squeezing these oranges? If possible, make a mark on the measuring jug with different coloured marker pens. Using a lemon squeezer, collect the juice with the children's help and pour into the measuring jug. Who got the closest to predicting the amount of juice produced? Comment that grape juice and wine are made by squeezing grapes, which grow on a vine.

+ BIBLE STORY



You will need: grapes (cut in half); the short trunk of a vine (made out of card); four long branches, joined sideways to the top of the trunk by a split pin, two either side; scissors; purple felt-tip pen

Jared was the keeper of a vineyard. A vineyard is a farm that grows vines, and grapes grow on vines. *Show the grapes and give each child a half.* A vine plant has long branches that need to be held up to stop them collapsing onto the ground. A vine can be pinned to a wall or propped up by a strong piece of wood. *Show your cardboard vine.* Invite the children to draw a bunch of grapes on two of these branches.

Jared knows his vines need lots of sunlight. They also need warm soil and plenty of water to make the grapes grow plump and juicy.

Jared spends a lot of time making sure his vines are growing strong. If a branch has produced a bunch of grapes but the branch is looking floppy, he ties it against a wall or props it up with a strong stick. But if there is a branch that has not produced any grapes for a year or two, then he will cut it off. *Ask two children to cut off the two branches on the cardboard vine with no grapes on it.* This is called pruning. This makes the good branches produce more grapes.

Jesus said that God, his father, was like Jared, the vine keeper, who looks after the vines in the vineyard. He wants them to produce as many grapes as possible. But sometimes, we might be like a floppy or weak branch. We need to be propped up. God, like the keeper of the vineyard, will help us. *Bend one of the branches and then prop it up with a finger.*

Jesus himself is like the trunk of the vine. The branches joined to the trunk are the people who love Jesus. These branches must stay joined to Jesus so they can produce grapes. This means Jesus wants us to stay close to him so we can know how much he loves us, and so we can be kind and loving just like him.

+ CHATTING TOGETHER



If possible, involve someone in church who is a gardener or interested in plants. Invite them to talk about trees that have been cut down, pruned or coppiced. If possible, go outside to look at trees, hedges or plants.

Ask these questions:

- How do we know these plants have been looked after? What has been done to them? Why?
- What is Jesus saying when he talks about vines and grapes?

+ CREATIVE RESPONSE



You will need: A3 paper; glue; grape-shaped pieces of paper; green and purple felt-tip pens

On the top of a sheet of A3 paper, write: "Jesus said, 'I am the vine and you are the branches.'" Draw the outline of a vine trunk and branches at the top. Provide lots of grape-shaped pieces of paper, either purple or green, or provide pens for them to be coloured. Encourage the children to make a bunch of grapes to hang from the branch. Comment that the branches are joined to the trunk so they can produce lots of grapes. This could be displayed in the church. Continue to chat about the story and the children's ideas as you work.

+ PRAYER



You will need: grapes cut in half and a suitable alternative for children who don't like grapes

Give each child at least three grapes (or your alternative) telling them not to eat them yet. Sit as close as possible to each other, in a circle facing outwards. Alternatively, with younger children, give each of them a soft toy to hold close. Jesus told his friends (and us) that he wants us to stay close to him just as they are now.

After each of the following sentences in this prayer, everyone eats one grape:

Thank you, Jesus, that you want me to be close to you, just as branches are joined to vines.

Help me, Jesus, to know you are close to me when I am at school or nursery.

Because I am close to you, Jesus, help me to become more like you every day.

Amen

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